

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 20, 1959



MEMORANDUM OF MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT:  
(Thursday, 19 March at 10:45)

1. I indicated to the President that I wished to talk about Berlin and Germany. First, I wanted to follow up on the Tuesday (March 17) meeting. I reminded the President that the background for this meeting was really the Special NSC Meeting of 5 March, which he had requested, to discuss Berlin and Germany. I said that in my judgment the Special Meeting had not been satisfactory because of inadequate staffing and because the discussion did not follow the agenda which had been prepared for the meeting. Subsequent to the meeting I had talked with Mr. McElroy and Mr. Herter, both of whom agreed that we needed more preparation in advance of another meeting with the President, to be attended by representatives of State and Defense and Gordon Gray. The first such meeting had been held on Monday, 9 March; the second briefly on the 12th; and the third, and a very successful one, on the 14th. At that time I had agreed that State and Defense would draft the agenda for the meeting. However, the agenda did not come to me until about a half hour before the meeting and then it was in the form of a memorandum to the President.

I expressed to the President my view that the memorandum advanced the ball considerably but was inadequate in that it did not cover many contingencies which should have been presented and in it the assumptions were not clearly stated. I further expressed the view that neither State nor Defense representatives were too well prepared to discuss the memorandum which both Departments had signed.

I then raised this question with the President: Would it be desirable to have Gordon Gray assume a role in such meetings similar to that in National Security Council meetings in order to make sure all points were covered and all differences of view were expressed. The President felt that this would be desirable.

Next, I indicated to the President that there seemed to me to be four major phases of Berlin and Germany which should now be discussed.



The first was immediate negotiation with our allies, that is to say, the impending conference with Mr. Macmillan. I indicated to the President that I did not believe this to be a matter in which I would be involved and I had no suggestions, realizing that he was in every way fully prepared for the conference.

I said, however, that I did wish to discuss the other three phases. The first of these was contingency planning, and particularly the specifics of U.S. actions. I asked the President whether he wished me to continue to follow this and make certain that adequate staff work was accomplished in view of his repeatedly expressed concern about being sure we knew what we would do in various contingencies. I offered the view that I was not sure that State-Defense coordination was sufficient without the addition of staff work on behalf of the President, especially in light of the experience of the March 17 meeting. The President felt that he wanted me to undertake such a role.

As examples of matters which need to be considered I gave the following:

(a) The importance of the dispatch of teams to Europe to examine what actually occurs at the check points. I pointed out to the President that in all the meetings he had had on this subject there had been no one in the room in any case who in recent years had observed the procedure on the ground. I pointed out to him that pending the report of the team, many decisions were stymied.

*Creditentials*  
(b) The question of referring creditals to the International Court of Justice.

(c) The question of having Western guards replace East German guards.

(d) The question of the assumption by the United Nations of the identification function.

(e) What constitutes K-Day.

(f) What is meant by "forceable obstruction."



(g) Can we make a distinction between identification and stamping.

(h) The question of recourse to the United Nations -- what, how and when.

(i) The question of diplomatic rupture.

(j) The question of trade impact on the Soviet Bloc following diplomatic rupture.

(k) Blockade

(l) The question of whether we would consider a probe if negotiations were in progress but deadlocked, such as in the Geneva Conference on Discontinuance of Nuclear Testing.

The second phase involved the study and analysis of alternative uses of force by State, Defense, JCS and CIA which had been approved by the President on 17 March. I said that I believed that the President had on 17 March approved the notion of having this report made to a Special Meeting of the NSC but that I wished to make sure that there was advance preparation of the principal members of the Council before the report was actually presented and wished to communicate the desirability of this procedure to the principals. The President agreed.

The final phase involved Germany as a whole. I pointed out to the President that the working group which is now in Paris would be finishing their work this week end. They have been using a talking paper which of course was ad referendum but which contained all sorts of national security policy issues such as disarmament measures, neutral zone, etc. I pointed out to the President that there would be a Three-power Foreign Ministers Meeting (US-UK-France) probably on March 31, or April 1, and also probably a four-power Foreign Ministers Meeting (US-UK-France-Germany) at the same time. The purpose of these meetings has been stated to give general guidance with respect to governmental positions on the whole German problem. Furthermore, the NATO meeting would take place April 2 to April 4.

I then said to the President that the big question was this: At what point does the document and the positions covered by the document cease to be a talking paper and become the beginning of a U.S. position. I indicated that it was not clear that a U.S. position must be firm before the end of this month but the time was coming when matters would have to be presented to the President for his final decision.



I raised with him the question of whether a report of progress of the working group and the State Department estimate relating thereto, should not be given to the NSC on March 26 or a Special Meeting of the Council at about that time. I suggested that the purpose of this meeting would not be to arrive at final decisions but to identify those problems with respect to which Presidential decision would be required and also with respect to which differences of view existed within Executive Departments.

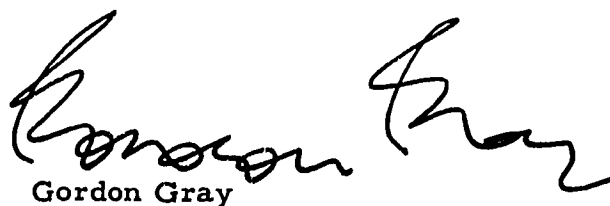
The President thought well of this and suggested that a presentation be made visually, that is to say, by the use of charts. He felt that the various steps in the process leading to a German settlement could be visually presented and those checked off with respect to which decisions had already been taken or could easily be taken and others could be flagged for serious consideration.

2. I then discussed with the President the timetable for the four Defense presentations. I pointed out to him that I saw no difficulty in the Antisubmarine Warfare date or even the Tactical Force date. I reported to him that Mr. Quarles was aware that the Continental Defense presentation would have serious implications for the 1961 budget although I had taken care at all times not to put forward these presentations as having any immediate budgetary implications. Therefore, I told him, that I was sure that Mr. Quarles would seek if at all possible to improve on the August 15 date.

The President expressed surprise and dismay at a December 1, or November 15 date for the Strategic Striking Force presentation saying that he had not had in mind that it would take anything near that long. I then explained to the President Mr. Quarles point of view which was that in view of the hopeless split of the Joint Chiefs, it would be necessary

to war game the problem if the JCS were not to attack every assumption made in the study. I indicated to the President that I felt that yielding a couple of months in time would gain much more in value to him and that I was reluctant to force the presentation at a time when Defense would undoubtedly say that insufficient time had rendered the validity of the study questionable.

3. I then reported to the President on the result of a particular French election.

  
Gordon Gray



cc: Mr. Lay